

Message Text

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42

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7941

INFO AMEMBASSY LOME NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1950

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, CPRS, PINS, TO, DM

SUBJ: ALLEGED DETENTION OF US CITIZENS IN NORTHERN BENIN

REF A. STATE 300249 B. COTONOU 1947 C. LOME 2808 (SAME AS
COTONOU 1946)

1. SINCE LACK OF CITIZENSHIP AND PPT RECORDS REFLECTED REF A WOULD SUGGEST POSSIBILITY THAT ALLEGATIONS MAY BE FALSE, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT AFTER RECHECKING PPT FILES DEPT COMMUNICATE WITH LOS ANGELES HERALD EXAMINER, THEN OTHER CONTACTS OF ALLEGED AMERICANS OUTLINED REF C. SUGGEST DEPT NOT DIVULGE NATURE OF CASE AT THIS TIME. IF IT TURNS OUT THAT SUCH PERSONS INDEED EXIST AND ARE TRAVELLING IN AFRICA AT PRESENT, DEPT COULD SAY WE UNDERSTAND THEY ARE OVERDUE ON TRIP WESTWARD FROM NIGERIA AND THAT, FOR REASONS RELATING TO OUR CONSULAR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROTECTING AND ASSISTING AMERICAN CITIZENS, WE ARE JUST ROUTINELY CHECKING THE MATTER OUT. (WHEN TRAVELING OVERLAND THROUGH THE BUSH, AMCITS SOMETIMES GET STRANDED DUE TO ILLNESS, LOSS OF FUNDS, ETC., AND NEED HELP.)

2. TYPES OF INFORMATION TO BE SOUGHT: WHETHER SUCH PERSONS EXIST, WHETHER THEY ARE TRAVELING IN AFRICA AT PRESENT, POINT LAST HEARD FROM, DESTINATIONS, OBJECTS OF TRAVEL, AND IN
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CASE OF FEENEY NATURE OF HIS REPORTING ASSIGNMENT, IF ANY.

3. FURTHER ACTIONS TAKEN HERE: EMBOFF SENT TO DJOUGOU EARLY THIS MORNING (BEFORE RECEIPT OF REF A) TO MAKE INQUIRIES OF AUTHORITIES THERE. WE HAVE NOT YET HAD ANY RESULTS FROM DEPDIR OF SURETE NATIONAL'S UNDERTAKING TO COMMUNICATE WITH DJOUGOU GENDARERIE POST YESTERDAY.

4. FOR LOME: DID THE INFORMANT PRODUCE ANY PPT OR OTHER PAPERS TO ESTABLISH HIS IDENTITY? SUGGEST YOU ATTEMPT LOCATE HIM AND CONDUCT A MORE DETAILED INTERVIEW AIMED AT OBTAINING FURTHER BASIS FOR EVALUATING AUTHENTICITY OF STORY. FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT ROUTE DID THE SOURCE TAKE TO GET TO LOME? WHY DID HE TRAVEL TO LOME, RATHER THAN SOMEWHERE ELSE? WHAT IS HIS BUSINESS IN WEST AFRICA? WAS HE PAID BY THE AMERICANS? WHY WAS HE ARRESTED? HOW DID HE ESCAPE? WHAT WAS THE PLACE OF DETENTION LIKE? EXACTLY WHERE WAS IT, IN RELATION TO DJOUGOU TOWN? HOW DID HE MANAGE TO TRAVEL 35 KILOMETERS TO THE CLOSED FRONTIER AND GET ACROSS IT WITHOUT BEING PICKED UP AGAIN?

5. COMMENT: IF AS NOW SEEMS WITHIN THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY, THIS IS A HOAX TO INDUCE A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE PRB AND THE USG, MOST LIKELY FABRICATORS WOULD, IN OUR OPINION, BE A) THE EXILE FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION AND REHABILITATION OF DAHOMEY, OR B) THE SOVIETS, WHO HAVE SO OFTEN BEFORE CONCOCTED ANTI-US FORGERIES AND "CON GAMES".

6. PRB HAS BAD RECORD IN REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING SHABBY TREATMENT OF FOREIGNERS TAKEN IN FOR QUESTIONING (E.G., ARREST OF ASSTDIR OF PEACE CORPS LAST FEB; ALSO SEE COTONOU 1588 RE IN-TRANSIT ARAB WELDERS, REPORTEDLY EN ROUTE TO TOGO, REPORTEDLY SEIZED IN COTONOU IN AUG AND TAKEN TO PARAKOU, WHERE THEY ARE BEING HELD INCOMMUNICADO). NEVERTHELESS, FOR TIME BEING WE WILL NOT PRESS PRB GOVT FURTHER IN THIS MATTER UNTIL EITHER A) SOME POSITIVE EVIDENCE COMES TO LIGHT HERE, OR B) ADDITIONAL RESEARCH INTO EXISTENCE AND AFRICAN TRAVELS OF THE AMCITS HAS BEEN COMPLETED (PER ABOVE PARAS ONE AND TWO AND REF B PARA SIX). BY THIS EVENING OR TOMORROW, WHEN WE WILL HAVE REPORTS FROM OTHER WEST AFRICAN POSTS (REQUESTED REF B), RESULTS OF DEPT'S RESEARCH INTO ALLEGED AMCIT TRAVELERS, AND FINDINGS OF EMBOFF WHO WENT TO CONFIDENTIAL

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DJOUGOU, WE WILL HAVE BETTER IDEA HOW TO PROCEED FURTHER IN THIS MATTER. END COMMENT.
ENGLE

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